Healthy Beginnings: Lead Safe Families

An English as a Second Language Curriculum on Lead Poisoning Prevention

Teacher's Guide

Developed by Education Development Center, Inc. with support from the New England Office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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Contents

1 Acknowledgments

The development of *Healthy Beginnings: Lead Safe Families* involved the active and intense collaboration of many individuals who represent a union between the professions of health and literacy education. This easy-to-use curriculum responds to the environmental health concerns of adult speakers of English as a Second Language. With funding from the New England Office of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), *Healthy Beginnings* project staff developed, pilot-tested, and evaluated the original version of this curriculum. Following the evaluation, *Healthy Beginnings* staff worked together to revise the ESL materials to reflect evaluation findings.

The project staff of Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) wish to express gratitude to EPA-New England for its long-standing support of environmental education and justice. In particular, we would like to thank our project officer, Alice Kaufman, for her valuable advice and continued support of this project from inception to completion. We would also like to express a special thanks to the EPA Region I Lead Coordinator, Ann Carroll, M.P.H., for her continued support and input.

The project staff also appreciate the invaluable assistance provided by the *Healthy Beginnings* advisors and reviewers, as an expression of their commitment to lead poisoning prevention, environmental justice, and health and literacy education.

EDC STAFF

Healthy Beginnings *Project Staff*

John Wong, Ph.D.
Project Director

Kimberly Dash, M.P.H.
Health Education Curriculum Specialist

Casey Kopac, M.Ed.
ESL Curriculum Specialist

Gail Greenblatt
Research Assistant

Gaea Honeycutt
Marketing Coordinator

Tajah Holmes
Senior Administrative Assistant

Healthy Beginnings *Production Staff*

Jennifer Roscoe
Production Manager

Heidi LaFleche
Production Coordinator

John Egan
Illustrator

Catherine A. Lee
Erik Peterson
Layout

M.G. Wood
Copy Editor

Sandra J. Belk
Graphic Designer

NEW ENGLAND OFFICE OF THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY REVIEWERS

Alice Kaufman
Project Officer

Ann Carroll, M.P.H.
Lead Coordinator

Ginger Parker, M.C.P.
Urban Planner

Charles Augustine
NNEMS Fellow

Maureen McClelland, R.N., M.P.H.
Toxicologist

MaryBeth Smuts, Ph.D., M.A.
Toxicologist

ADDITIONAL REVIEWERS

Douglas Brugge, Ph.D., M.S.
Tufts University School of Medicine
Environmental Health Policy Information Project

Joan Cayan
Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Susan Bascom, R.N.
New Hampshire Department of Health

Jan Flaherty
Rhode Island Department of Health

Gabriel Cano
Rhode Island Department of Health

Abdi Yusuf
Office of Environmental Health
City of Boston

PILOT-TEST SITES AND TEACHERS

Annie Chin
Lisa Garrone
Parningotan Gultom
Deborah Mattina
Judy Przybek
Asian American Civic Association
Boston, MA

Patricia Martinez
Progresso Latino
Central Falls, RI

Dale LaVorado
Puerto Rican Forum
Hartford, CT

Lynn Sweezy
Donald McKay School
East Boston, MA

Janet Kalman
Ann Neill
Roosevelt Learning Center
Sanford, ME

PILOT-TEST SITES AND TEACHERS

Sister Catherine McGreevy
Nina Cedrone
Katie Murray
Family Outreach Center
Providence, RI

Sandra Gifford
Rina Giannini
Dori Kowar
LearningWorks
New Britain, CT

Meryl Becker
M. J. Curry
Sue Furbish
Susan Grace
Richard Peters
Betty Stone
SCALE
Somerville, MA

PROJECT EVALUATOR
Marcus Lieberman, Ph.D.

GLOSSARY TRANSLATION
Cambridge Translation Resources
Boston, MA

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We would also like to thank Thad Davis for his assistance in coordinating the translation of lesson vocabulary and Christopher Hass for providing desktop publishing assistance on the pilot-test version of *Healthy Beginnings.*

2 Welcome to Healthy Beginnings

April 1996

Dear Teacher:

Lead poisoning is a serious problem. The American Academy of Pediatrics has identified it as one of the most dangerous toxicological hazards facing young children in New England and across the United States.

Children in minority and low-income communities, including linguistic minorities, are affected most by high blood lead levels. Lead poisoning can cause learning problems and affect academic performance, loss of hearing, and behavioral problems later in life.

Despite the scope of the problem, we know what causes lead poisoning and we know how to prevent it. In fact, there are simple steps families can take to protect their children from this pervasive environmental hazard.

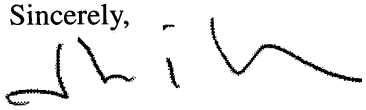
EPA-New England's commitment to ensure that equal environmental protection is provided to all New Englanders has meant the development of many new programs in the region's disadvantaged communities and urban centers. An example of this effort is *Healthy Beginnings: Lead Safe Families*—a curriculum for teaching critical lead poisoning prevention information to students as part of their adult English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

This curriculum will help adults learning English understand the risks of lead poisoning. It offers simple, practical steps to help prevent this problem in their homes. Equally important, this curriculum is designed to help ESL instructors teach English by presenting information about lead within the context of everyday life.

You need not become an expert in lead poisoning prevention. The Teacher's Guide lists New England state experts in lead poisoning prevention that your students can call or write to for additional information.

Thank you for your continued commitment to help new Americans adjust to life in this country and to help them learn how to reduce risks of childhood lead poisoning.

Sincerely,



John P. DeVillars
Regional Administrator

3 Purpose of Healthy Beginnings

Lead poisoning is one of the most pervasive toxicological hazards facing young children in the United States today. Studies of pollution and environmental stresses in New England show that lead presents one of the highest health risks in the region.

Children in minority and low-income communities—including those for whom English is a second language—are at increased risk for lead poisoning because they tend to live in older, unmaintained homes. The effects of high blood lead levels for children may include poor academic performance, loss of hearing, and behavioral problems later in life.

To reduce and eliminate lead poisoning among those groups most at risk, Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), has developed *Healthy Beginnings: Lead Safe Families* to integrate lead poisoning prevention into community-based adult English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.

The purpose of this curriculum is twofold. First, it is designed to help adults understand how their children may be at risk for lead poisoning and the simple steps they can take to prevent lead poisoning among their children. Because occurrences of severe lead poisoning are relatively rare, the emphasis of the curriculum is to empower parents and other adults to make changes in their environments rather than alarm or scare them about lead poisoning.

Second, the curriculum is designed to help ESL instructors encourage use of English and present lead information within the context of daily living situations that new English speakers face. *Healthy Beginnings* was developed to raise overall English literacy and health-related skills, not to teach English grammar skills. The units teach important health skills such as communication, risk assessment, self-advocacy, decisionmaking, and healthy self-management.

Teachers and students are encouraged to make copies of *Healthy Beginnings* to share with colleagues, friends, and family.

4 Using Healthy Beginnings

We do not prescribe an approach to using *Healthy Beginnings*. You may teach the units in any order. In fact, you may want to let students set the course for discussing lead poisoning prevention issues that have special relevance for them.

Can the units be used individually or must they be used as a package? Each unit has been developed to stand alone and to be used with students at beginner's, intermediate, and advanced ESL. The revised units can be used independently, in conjunction with other materials in a longer, more detailed course of study, or as a supplement to materials already in use. Used as a whole, the revised package constitutes a comprehensive lead poisoning prevention curriculum for ESL students.

Teachers will notice that the individual units contain much repetition. The reason for repetition is to allow teachers who are extremely pressed for time to be able to convey most of the key lead poisoning prevention points by teaching only one or two units. Some units tend to be more comprehensive than others. For example, a teacher with little time to devote to lead poisoning prevention would want to select a more comprehensive unit, such as "Making Your Home Safe" or "Going to the Doctor." Whereas a teacher who would like to devote more time to lead poisoning prevention might want to teach individual units on lead in the soil, water, and food.

Can* Healthy Beginnings *be integrated into other ESL lessons? *Healthy Beginnings* can be integrated into ESL lessons that examine general topics related to housing, food or nutrition, and health services. In fact, *Healthy Beginnings* was designed to parallel these topics and to teach important health-related skills, such as self-advocacy, communication, and risk assessment. For example, teachers focusing on housing issues might want to integrate the units on "Finding the Right Home" and "Renovating Your Home" into their lesson plans. The table below illustrates how *Healthy Beginnings* units relate to typical ESL topics.

Unit	*Topic*		
	Housing	**Food/Nutrition**	**Health Services**
Going to the Doctor			√
Identifying Symptoms of Illness			√
Making Water Safe to Drink	√	√	
Preparing and Storing Food		√	
Avoiding Dangers in the Dirt	√	√	
Finding the Right Home	√		
Identifying Household Hazards	√		
Making Your Home Safe	√		
Renovating Your Home	√		

Is the teacher expected to be an expert on lead poisoning prevention? Teachers are not expected to be experts in lead poisoning prevention. We recognize that ESL instructors are expected and encouraged to teach a range of health-related topics and cannot possibly become experts in all of these. Should you have questions regarding any of the content, please call or write to your local health department's childhood lead poisoning prevention program or the Environmental Protection Agency for accurate and up-to-date information on lead hazard identification and lead poisoning prevention.

How should the teacher handle student questions about landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities? Perhaps the best way to handle student questions regarding lead poisoning prevention is to refer students to their local or state health department's childhood lead poisoning prevention program. Landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities regarding lead poisoning prevention differ from state to state. Massachusetts, for example, has some of the toughest lead laws in the country. Landlords in Massachusetts are required to disclose and prove to tenants with children the presence or absence of lead on their properties. Moreover, landlords who rent to families with children are required within a specific time period to delead their apartments. Such strict laws have created a difficult situation for potential tenants and homeowners. Many tenants are illegally turned away by landlords who do not want to rent to families with children for fear that they will have to delead their apartments—a very expensive undertaking. Other states do not have such strict lead laws, but do have laws in place that outline landlord responsibilities regarding the prevention of lead poisoning. Tenants in other New England states may also hold their landlords accountable when their children are poisoned by lead in the apartment. For more information, call or write to your local childhood lead poisoning prevention program.

Does* Healthy Beginnings *teach English grammar? The curriculum is designed to help ESL instructors encourage use of English and present lead information within the context of daily living issues that new English speakers face. *Healthy Beginnings* was not necessarily developed to teach English grammar skills as much as it was to raise overall English literacy and health-related skills. Teachers may want to supplement the *Healthy Beginnings* units with grammar exercises.

What are some of the ways I can supplement these materials? We strongly encourage ESL teachers to supplement these units with related materials and activities. Many of the pilot-site teachers supplemented the *Healthy Beginnings* materials with English grammar exercises, illustrations or photographs of houses, and photocopies of articles on lead poisoning. One pilot-site teacher invited guest speakers from the state health department's childhood lead poisoning prevention program. Other pilot-site teachers asked students to collect soil, paint, and water samples from their homes and then sent the samples to be lab-tested for lead content. One teacher even brought a lead paint test kit to class. Other suggestions from pilot sites included class field trips such as visiting a doctor's office or clinic and walking through a house to identify trouble spots for lead hazards.

5 Description of the Units

We have developed nine units for use at the intermediate/advanced ESL level and six units for the beginner's level. Each unit is a complete teaching package: it poses a specific situation relating to lead hazards and shows people how to protect their families. Vocabulary lists, workbook style questions, sentence completion exercises, and illustrated checklists are included in each unit. The nine units at the intermediate/advanced level are listed and described below; the beginner's level curriculum parallels the intermediate/advanced curriculum.

Going to the Doctor
Identifying Symptoms of Illness
Making Water Safe to Drink
Preparing and Storing Food
Avoiding Dangers in the Dirt
Finding the Right Home
Identifying Household Hazards*
Making Your Home Safe*
Renovating Your Home*

Going to the Doctor

In this unit, students are encouraged to think about the importance of routine lead screening at sick or well-child visits to the doctor. Through patient-physician dialogues, students learn that children under the age of six are most at risk for lead poisoning and that all children between the ages of nine months and six years should be checked for lead. These tests are very important for children who live or spend time in older buildings that may have lead paint. Students also role-play a conversation between a parent and a doctor to help strengthen their communication skills with physicians and other health care providers about health concerns such as lead poisoning. Students learn that blood tests can help determine if someone has taken too much lead before they show any outward signs of illness and that a lead test result of 10 micrograms per deciliter may be considered dangerous to children. Finally, students explore ways that parents can help limit the effects of lead poisoning such as getting good medical care for their child(ren), feeding their child(ren) a nutritious and balanced diet, and keeping objects that have lead away from their child(ren).

Identifying Symptoms of Illness

This unit helps students develop a vocabulary for describing their symptoms of illness, including those symptoms associated with severe lead poisoning (e.g., a lead test result that is equal to or greater than 20 micrograms of lead per deciliter). Through a series of patient-provider dialogues and discussion exercises, students review the general symptoms of illness and the symptoms of serious

*Only available in the intermediate/advanced version.

lead poisoning, such as stomachaches, loss of appetite, loss of interest in play, and irritability. Students learn that most children who have lead poisoning never look sick. In unit activities, they read and talk about how lead poisoning can cause learning disabilities, behavior problems, emotional retardation, and stunted growth later in life. Most important, students learn that prevention is the best way to protect children from lead poisoning because no treatment completely removes lead from the body.

Making Water Safe to Drink

In this unit, students learn how to test their water for lead and strategies for reducing lead content in water. Through reading, discussion, and written exercises, students learn that they should test their water if their supply comes from a drinking well, pipes with lead solder, or water known to be very corrosive. Students are encouraged to collect water samples from home. They also discover where they can get their water tested (i.e., at certified laboratories). Students talk about and distinguish between safe and unsafe levels of lead in the water. They learn that if water has too much lead, families can reduce the risk of lead poisoning by running the faucet for a minute before drinking the water, and cooking or washing vegetables with cold water. Students also examine more costly solutions, such as using bottled water and installing a recommended filter. This unit also includes some discussion of pregnancy and lead. Students learn that lead can pass to the fetus and that lead exposure during pregnancy may result in miscarriage, low birth weight, birth defects, and slower development in children. Students review precautions that pregnant women can take to protect themselves and the fetus from lead poisoning.

Preparing and Storing Food

In this unit, students examine the number of ways lead can get into food: lead dust settles on food stored in open containers; lead-based glazes on handmade or imported dishes leach into the food; lead from the soil in city gardens can be absorbed into vegetables; and lead in the water gets on food during cooking. Through reading, discussion, and written activities, students learn ways that families can carefully prepare and store food so that it is not contaminated with lead. Students also review some additional household changes that reduce the risk of lead in the home; changes that do not take much time and can easily become part of their everyday lives. Students learn that one important way to reduce the amount of lead children absorb is by preparing and feeding them nutritious and balanced meals. At the end of the unit, students practice developing balanced and nutritious menus that include foods high in calcium, iron, and vitamin C.

Avoiding Dangers in the Dirt

Through a story about growing food in the city, students learn ways to test for lead in the soil and strategies for reducing children's exposure to lead. Students learn that almost all the lead in soil comes from lead-based paint chips flaking from homes. They learn that the danger of lead in soil depends on the amount of

lead in the soil around the house and the amount of soil that gets into children. In general, vegetables that are grown in soil containing lead do not absorb much lead, but students learn that they should wash these vegetables carefully to remove any soil. To determine if their soil contains lead, students can collect soil samples from areas in their yard where children normally play and send the samples to laboratories for testing. They discuss what levels of lead are dangerous in soil and precautions they should take to reduce children's exposure to lead in the soil.

Finding the Right Home

For many new immigrants in this country, finding the right home is an important issue. Each family will have its own decision to make when it rents an apartment or buys a house. This unit explores the factors that families consider when selecting a home with a special emphasis on identifying risks of lead poisoning. Students identify, through a conversation between landlord and potential tenant, the things that may indicate lead hazards, such as a house built before 1978; peeling or chipping paint; and painted windows, doors, and door frames. Students also explore the steps they and their landlords should take to reduce the risk of lead poisoning. Again, the issue of pregnancy and lead poisoning is discussed. Students learn that pregnant women should avoid excessive exposure to lead in water, soil, and paint (dust).

Identifying Household Hazards

In this unit, students practice identifying household hazards, such as lead paint. Students explore various safety issues through a story about concerned parents and learn that the danger of lead in paint depends on the amount of lead paint in the house and the amount of lead dust that gets into children. Students identify things in the home that may indicate lead hazards, such as a house built before 1978; painted woodwork on doors, windows, or trim; and peeling or chipping paint. Students also have the option of collecting paint samples from their homes to test for lead. Finally, they learn that they can have someone else test their paint for lead and discuss what the results of a lead paint test mean.

Making Your Home Safe

This is a very general unit designed to point out that lead is only one of many household hazards that can cause harm to children. The unit includes a safety checklist that helps students identify hazards in their home. Students learn that one of the greatest household hazards is lead and that children with lead in their blood are at increased risk of developing health and learning problems later in life. Students also read a story about a young mother who discovers, at a routine medical checkup, that her children have lead poisoning. The emphasis of the unit is on the simple steps families can take to reduce the risk of childhood lead poisoning in their homes. Using illustrations, students review these strategies and talk about ways to implement them in their homes.

Renovating Your Home

Home renovations and repairs can increase the amount of lead dust in the home and, thus, the amount absorbed by children and other household members. In this unit, students learn that before repairing or renovating a home or apartment, they should call the local health department and ask if individuals there or elsewhere can test for lead-based paint. Students also examine ways to make lead paint in their homes less dangerous: replacing it, covering it, or removing it. The first two methods are the safest; the third is the most dangerous. This unit emphasizes that homeowners should not attempt to remove lead paint themselves; they should hire a qualified contractor. Students read and discuss a checklist that describes guidelines contractors should follow when removing lead.

APPENDIX A

Recommended Student Reading List

"Aggressiveness, delinquency among boys are linked to lead levels," *The Boston Globe*, by Richard Saltus, February 8, 1996.

"D.C. delays lead-testing in public housing renovation," *The Washington Post,* by Ruben Castaneda, December 22, 1992.

"Despite reductions in exposure, lead remains danger to children," *The New York Times,* by Jane E. Brody, March 21,1995.

"Getting rid of lead," *Old House Journal*, by Marylee MacDonald, July/ August 1992.

"Get the lead out, toy soldiers ordered," *The Sun*, by Dan Fesperman, December 14, 1992.

"Group criticizes New York City on quality of its lead testing," *The New York Times,* Section B, page 3, by Steven Lee Myers, December 31, 1992.

"The heat cools on asbestos removal," *The Washington Post*, by Jay Matthews, December 31, 1992.

"Improving safety when removing lead-based paint," *The New York Times*, by John Holusha, December 20, 1992.

"New lead paint law slow to create impact," *The Boston Globe*, by Tina Cassidy, October 7, 1995.

"Not just for kids," Elizabeth B. Schmidt, *Harvard Health Letter,* May, 1992.

"Personal health: How to safeguard children from lead exposure," *The New York Times*, by Jane E. Brody, March 22, 1995.

"State lead poisoning commission gathers the experts and watches them argue," *The Sun*, by Timothy B. Wheeler, December 15, 1992.

"Study links lead levels in bones to delinquency," by Lindsey Tanner, *The Washington Post*, Associated Press, February 7, 1996.

APPENDIX B

State Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Programs

Alan Buzzetti
Paul Shur
Scott Szalkiewcz
Department of Health Services
Environmental Health Services Division
150 Washington Street
Hartford, CT 06106
(203) 566-5808

Joan Cayan
Brad Prenney
Sharon Cameron
Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
Massachusetts Department of Health
305 South Street
Boston, MA 02130
(617) 522-3700 ext. 175

Edna Jones
Steve Zayszly
Jerry Reed
Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
Bureau of Health
State House Station 11
151 Capitol Street
Augusta, ME 04333
(207) 287-4311

Martha Wells
Susan Bascom
Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Project
6 Hazen Drive
Concord, NH 03301
(603) 271-4507

Lynn Boulay
Gabriel Cano
Jan Flaherty
Office of Environmental Risk Assessment
Rhode Island Department of Health
206 Cannon Building
3 Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02908
(401) 277-3424

Karen Garbarino
Chris Vollaro
Sheri Cummington
Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
Vermont Department of Health
108 Cherry Street
Burlington, VT 05402
(802) 865-7786

APPENDIX C

Selected Laboratories for Testing Lead in Water, Soil, and Paint

SOIL TESTING

Connecticut Department of Public Health
Public Health Laboratory
Environmental Chemistry Division
10 Clinton Street
Hartford, CT 06106
(203) 566-3701
Cost: $22.50 per sample

Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory
Department of Human Services
State House Station 12
221 State Street
Augusta, ME 04333
(207) 287-2727
Cost: $35 per sample

University of Massachusetts (for MA and RI)
Soil Testing Laboratory
West Experiment Station
North Pleasant Street
Amherst, MA 01003-2802
(413) 545-2311
Cost: approximately $7 per sample

New Hampshire Division of Public Health Laboratories
6 Hazen Drive
Concord, NH 03301
(603) 271-4661 (in NH, (800) 852-3345, ext. 4661)
Cost: $40 per sample, price reduced by 1/2 in cases of a lead poisoned child

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
Vermont Department of Health
P.O. Box 70
108 Cherry Street
Burlington, VT 05402
(800) 439-8550 or (802) 865-7786
Call to receive a list of testing laboratories including the Vermont state laboratory.

WATER TESTING

Connecticut Department of Public Health
Public Health Laboratory
Environmental Chemistry Division
10 Clinton Street
Hartford, CT 06106
(203) 566-3701
Cost: $23.50 per sample

Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory
Department of Human Services
State House Station 12
221 State Street
Augusta, ME 04333
(207) 287-2727
Cost: $10 per sample

Massachusetts Department of Public Health
State Laboratory Institute
Environmental Laboratory
305 South Street
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
(617) 522-3700, ext. 6639 (for kit) or ext. 6650 (for analysis related questions)
Cost: $42.50 for home water testing kit and sample analysis

Lead Solutions
160 Second Street
Cambridge, MA 02142-1599
Cost: $49.95 for a home water testing kit

Department of Environmental Services
Water Laboratory
6 Hazen Drive
Concord, NH 03301
(603) 271-3445
Cost: $40 for complete testing and $10 for lead testing only. Call or write for materials and instructions.

Rhode Island Department of Health
Chapin Laboratory
50 Orms Street
Providence, RI 02908
(401) 274-1011

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
Vermont Department of Health
P.O. Box 70
108 Cherry Street
Burlington, VT 05402
(800) 439-8550 or (802) 865-7786
Call to receive a list of testing laboratories including the Vermont state laboratory.

LEAD PAINT TESTING

Connecticut Department of Public Health
Public Health Laboratory
Environmental Chemistry Division
10 Clinton Street
Hartford, CT 06106
(203) 566-3701
Cost: $20 per sample

Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory
Department of Human Services
State House Station 12
221 State Street
Augusta, ME 04333
(207) 287-2727
Cost: $35 per sample

Office of Environmental Health
Lead Lab
FGH Building, Ground Floor
818 Harrison Avenue
Boston, MA 02118
(617) 534-5965
Cost: No charge for Boston residents

Massachusetts Department of Public Health
State Laboratory Institute
Environmental Laboratory
305 South Street, Room 315
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
(617) 983-6654
Cost: $10 per sample

New Hampshire Division of Public Health Laboratories
6 Hazen Drive
Concord, NH 03301
(603) 271-4661 (in NH, (800) 852-3345, ext. 4661)
Cost: $30 per sample

Analytical Testing Services, Inc.
27 Thurber Avenue
Smithfield, RI 02917
(401) 232-1420

New England Testing Lab, Inc.
1254 Douglas Avenue
North Providence, RI 02904
(401) 353-3420

Rhode Island Analytical Labs, Inc.
41 Illinois Avenue
Warwick, RI 02888

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
Vermont Department of Health
P.O. Box 70
108 Cherry Street
Burlington, VT 05402
(800) 439-8550 or (802) 865-7786
Call to receive a list of testing laboratories including the Vermont state laboratory.

EVALUATION SURVEY

Healthy Beginnings: Lead Safe Families

The developers and sponsors of this curriculum welcome your comments on *Healthy Beginnings: Lead Safe Families.* Please complete this survey.

1. Agency Name: _____

2. Agency Address: _____

3. Phone Number: _____

4. Fax Number: _____

5. E-Mail: _____

6. Is the agency a nonprofit? YES _____ NO _____

7. Please provide a short agency description (or attach a short statement or brochure). _____

   _____

   _____

8. To what extent does your curriculum normally include health and safety issues? Does it cover the dangers of lead poisoning? _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

9. Why did you choose to teach *Healthy Beginnings*? _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

10. Please tell us how you used *Healthy Beginnings.* How many classes did you teach? How often? _____

    _____

    _____

11. Please give us your review of *Healthy Beginnings*. Did you like it? Was it useful? _____

_____

_____

_____

12. Do you intend to continue to use *Healthy Beginnings*? Would you recommend it to other ESL instructors and programs? _____

_____

_____

_____

13. Please tell us about your students. What are the native languages of the students in your classes? How old are they? Do they have children under the age of five? _____

_____

_____

_____

14. Had your students known about the dangers of lead poisoning before you used *Healthy Beginnings*? Had they been concerned about it? _____

_____

_____

_____

15. How did your students feel about learning the dangers of lead poisoning? Did they like using *Healthy Beginnings*? What did they say about it? ____

_____

_____

16. Please tell us what effect, if any, did using *Healthy Beginnings* and learning about lead poisoning have on the students. Did they understand the risks of lead poisoning better? Did they follow the recommendations in *Healthy Beginnings* on how to reduce the risk of lead poisoning? _____

_____

_____

_____

17. Any additional comments that you have about *Healthy Beginnings* are welcomed. _____

_____

_____

_____

OPTIONAL: Name of person completing this survey, address, and phone number: _____

_____

_____

Thank you. Please send your completed survey to:
John Wong, Ph.D., Project Director
Education Development Center, Inc.
55 Chapel Street
Newton, MA 02158-1060
Tel. (617) 969-7100, fax (617) 332-4318, e-mail: johnw@edc.org

NOTES